TITLE OF THE INVENTION

[0001]   SYSTEM AND METHOD FOR MAINTAINING A WEB SITE

CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0002]   This application claims the benefit of U.S. Provisional Patent Application No.
60/213,222, filed June 14, 2000 entitled "System and Method for Maintaining a Web Site," the
contents of which are hereby incorporated by reference in its entirety.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0003]   The present invention relates to a system and method for maintaining a web site
and more specifically to web content management.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE SEVERAL VIEWS OF THE DRAWINGS

[0004]   The foregoing, as well as the following detailed description of preferred
embodiments of the invention, will be better understood when read in conjunction with the
appended drawings. For the purpose of illustrating the invention, there is shown in the
drawings embodiments which are presently preferred. It should be understood, however, that
the invention is not limited to the precise arrangements and instrumentalities shown.

[0005]   In the drawings:

[0006]   Figure 1 is a flow diagram illustrating one embodiment of the invention.

[0007]   Figure 2 is a flow diagram illustrating another embodiment of the invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0008]   Web content management generally refers to editing and updating of material
contained on a web site. Solutions exist which allow a user to manage the content of a web site.
These solutions range from ground-up custom development using existing programming
environments, to the manual updating of content.

[0009]   Ground-up custom development of a content management solution with existing
programming environments require the professional services of high-end web developers and
often take several weeks to put in place, making implementation costs high. The result
however, is that non-technical content contributors thereafter can update web site content at
lower cost.

[0010] An organization which chooses not to implement a content management solution avoids initial costs, however, substantial costs will be incurred to employ a medium to high-end web developer(s) to perform the task of gathering disparate pieces of content from contributors and posting that content. As an organization's site grows, it can also quickly become unmanageable.

[0011] The system and method of the present invention allows a non-technical user to easily edit and update areas of content of a web site, and allows a moderately technical user to rapidly prepare content management solutions for use by non-technical content contributors. Additionally, content management development time and costs are reduced by an order of magnitude.

[0012] In one embodiment of the invention the system imports a number of web pages from an existing web site. The user/developer is prompted to indicate the web pages within a site which contain content elements which are to be made dynamic. The term dynamic, as used herein, generally refers to elements which can be edited and updated. The indicated web pages are used to create templates.

[0013] The developer is then prompted to provide one or more questions that will eventually be posed to a non-technical end user. For each question, the developer preferably provides the data type (text, list, link list, news list, anchor news list, graphic, etc.), the end user to whom that particular question will be posed, and the page which the end user will preview after the content is submitted. The list of questions (fields) serves as the end users' questions as well as the tags with which the developer will mark up the dynamically designated pages. This system requires a minimal number of definitions from the developer. By re-using the "field" name as both the end users' question and the content tag, the need for the developer to provide information and the chance of errors during those processes are diminished. The need for information from the developer regarding the location of the content tags disappears because of the process of replacing recognized tag(s) on the dynamically designated page(s).

[0014] The system preferably allows an authorized end user to log into the system. The end user is presented with the list of questions within his/her purview. The end user then selects a question and is presented with a web form in which the "answer" is placed. Upon submission of the answer by the end user, a parsing engine preferably populates the web templates by cycling through the dynamically designated page(s) and within each page, cycling through each field, replacing any recognized field with it's respective content. Upon

completing the parsing, the end user is presented with the designated preview page(s), to allow the end user to view the page template (now populated with the user submitted content).

[0015]   In another embodiment of the invention a method for maintaining a web site is provided comprising importing one or more web pages of a web site to a staging server, and formatting templates for one or more of the web pages from the web site. The templates include one or more fields. One or more content tags are assigned to one or more of the fields. One or more data types are also assigned to each of the fields. One or more users for each of the fields are designated. Input is received from one or more users. The templates are populated with the input from the one or more users, and the populated templates are exported to one or more web servers. The content tags preferably correspond to the questions posed to the users.

[0016]   In another embodiment the invention is a system providing a platform for coordinating content updates made by nontechnical professionals. The system stages updates for preview and authorization, receives content feeds from third parties, sends content feeds to third parties (i.e. aggregators and distributors of online content), and publishers to any live web server on the Internet. The system is simple to configure and use.

[0017]   In another embodiment of the invention, the system is designed to capture a site image on the staging server. The site image is captured by entering one or more optional parameters (i.e. how many levels to snake, megabyte limits etc.) and snaking a target site to create/capture the site image. One or more copies of the site image are stored on the staging server and can be used as the basis for the site templates to be created, and as the basis for the output or "staging" site. One or more databases are created on a database server, which are then populated with user data. A Data Source Name is then created on the web server which points to the one or more databases on the database server. The system then notifies the user/administrator/account manager that the web site/ project is ready to be templatized. The user/account manager can now quickly create a content management solution which can then be accessed by a site owner (i.e. for use as a personalized demonstration). The system and method of the present invention can be employed on an Intranet, Extranet or public Internet site, enabling an organization to employ a work flow management system that enables multiple contributors to define, create, and approve Web site content. The system allows everything from product descriptions, online inventory, shipping schedules, partner news, distributor locations, and customer data to be up-to-date and accurate. The system and method is designed

to enable an organization to innovate, plan, develop, deploy, operate, and manage the effectiveness of a web site.

[0018]   The system is preferably capable of drawing from and publishing to any type of web platform using FTP, NT, UNIX, LINUX, NEXT OS or the like. The system may also be designed to operate a subscription service.

[0019]   The present invention may implemented with any combination of hardware and software. If implemented as a computer-implemented apparatus, the present invention is implemented using means for performing all of the steps and functions described above. The present invention can also be included in an article of manufacture (e.g., one or more computer program products) having, for instance, computer useable media. The media has embodied therein, for instance, computers readable program code means for providing and facilitating the mechanisms of the present invention. The article of manufacture can be included as part of a computer system or sold separately.

[0020]   The invention is best understood from the above description when read in connection with the accompanying figures. Although the invention is described with reference to exemplary embodiments, it is not limited to those embodiments. Rather, the invention should be construed to include other variances and embodiments which may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the present invention.